



# Grace and Holy Spirit

The Heart of Cortland and the Home for All!

Parish Profile  
June 2023

## Mission

We are called to be a Church for the 21st century;  
sharing God's love through Worship, Acceptance,  
Compassion and Service.



## Background

Grace and Holy Spirit church is located in Cortland, NY which was named after Pierre Van Cortlandt, the first lieutenant governor of New York. As a city and the county seat of Cortland County, New York, it is a beautiful combination of city and rural living that has recently been [ranked one of the best and most affordable small towns to live in by national realtors](#). Cortland is known as the Crown City because it is located on a plane at the convergence of seven valleys that is both 1,130 feet above sea level and the closest incorporated city to the geographic center of NY. We acknowledge that throughout our history we have occupied the unceded ancestral land and home to the Iroquois or Haudenosaunee, central firekeepers of the six-nation Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Through our mission we strive to incorporate this acknowledgement into our work and embrace the growing diversity of our local community.



According to the 2020 Census, Cortland County's population stands at 46,809 and the city itself counts 17,556 people. All serve to essentially crown the state of NY. The most recent census indicates that the city of Cortland's racial composition is 91.1% white, 4.6% Hispanic or Latino, 3.4% Black/African American, 3.3% two or more races, and 1% Asian, trending toward a more diverse mix of ethnicities over the last ten years. Cortland is part of New York's Southern Tier Region and is surrounded by the town of Cortlandville and the Tioughnioga River, a tributary of the Susquehanna River. Cortland is also part of the central New York education corridor. It is home to the State University of New York at Cortland (SUNY Cortland) and is adjacent to Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3), Ithaca College, and Cornell University. Syracuse University, SUNY Upstate Medical University, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and LeMoyne College are to our north and Binghamton University (SUNY) is to our south. These colleges and universities make for a transient population swell that occurs throughout the academic year and the respective cities and towns in which they reside offer a wealth of diversity and culture.

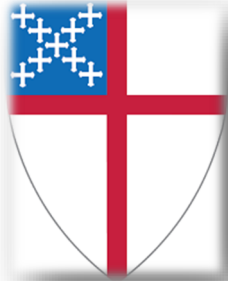




## Welcome

Grace and Holy Spirit Church sits at the heart of the city of Cortland and, as a blended Episcopal and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregation, strives to share God's love through service and compassion in this community in which it is deeply rooted. As we continue our mission of being a church of the 21st century, we hope to find a priest/pastor who can serve a 75% time commitment with us.





## Grace Episcopal Church

Grace Church was incorporated on Oct 14, 1847 under the acts of the New York legislature. Services were held intermittently in the courthouse, academy and the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Universalist Churches.

The first church building was completed in 1860. The Rev. Thomas G. Meacham served as its first rector. In 1887, the present building was constructed with John Arther presiding as Rector. In 1910, the parish hall was erected. In May of 1953, the congregation raised enough money to purchase a rectory, and in 1954 pledged enough money for the construction of adequate Church School facilities. In the 1960s, the sanctuary was reconfigured to accommodate the new Gress- Miles pipe organ which is still in use today.

The Rev. William Greer came to Grace Church in the 1980's, serving from 1981-1995. Rev Greer, ever cognizant of the hungry and those in need, was instrumental in establishing Cortland Loaves and Fishes in 1984 and offering our church building to support 12 step groups and other organizations.



Then



Now

We continue to house and support these programs to this day. In 2003, Rev Thomas Margrave (1997-2004) from Grace Church along with Rev Don Wilcox (1995-2003) from Holy Spirit Lutheran Church began initial discussions to establish a joint mission with both congregations. In 2005, Holy Spirit began sharing worship space and services with Grace Episcopal.

Rev Peter Williams (2010-2023) and a transition team of Episcopalians and Lutherans armed with prayers for guidance and love in their hearts, began the hard work of blending these two congregations into one. Parishioners from both congregations voted unanimously to merge. A legally binding letter of agreement was signed and on July 1, 2014 officially merging Grace and Holy Spirit as a religious society.





## Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

Following a survey of Cortland in summer of 1959, the Board of American Missions United Lutheran Church determined there was interest in forming a Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Holy Spirit Lutheran Church (HSLC) organized and was accepted into the United Lutheran Synod of New York and New England in 1960. The Rev. William Clasen was installed as the first Pastor and stayed until 1964. From 1966 to 1971, the congregation worshiped in a building of their own located on Tompkins Street; however, due to financial difficulties, sold the building to a local radio station (WKRT). Believing strongly that a church is really about the people and not a building, they made arrangements to worship at the State University of New York at Cortland. Interfaith Center from (1971- 2005) . Worship and religious education would continue under the Rev. James Bresnahan (1966 -1980) who worked in a part-time capacity, holding down a full time position at a social service agency in Binghamton and Rev. Donald Wilcox (1985-2003). By 2005, through the leadership of Rev Thomas Margrave and Rev. Donald Wilcox, the HSLC joined in worship with Grace Episcopal Church In 2005. The two church congregations would formally merge to become Grace and Holy Spirit in 2014.



Stained glass installed in memory of W.H. Twiss entered into rest Nov 26, 1885

## Governance

Grace and Holy Spirit is governed by three leadership groups. The Mission Leadership Board (MLB) oversees the daily running of our combined congregation. The Episcopal Vestry maintains our connection to the Episcopal Church. Lastly, the Lutheran Council maintains our connection with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Side view



Loaves & Fishes entrance



## Building and Campus

Grace and Holy Spirit is located in the heart of Cortland, sharing Court Street with Cortland Fire Services, Police Station, City Court, the Cortland Free Library, Cortland Beer Company, and Dominos Pizza. The Church campus sits on a sunny lot with small gardens and ample city parking.

Built in 1887, the Church is a white-washed building replete with historical stained glass and is fully handicap-accessible. The interior of the church has undergone a near-complete renovation of the sanctuary, offices, parish hall, organ cleaning, and undercroft (basement) as a result of repairs made after a fire with funds from insurance. Changes to the church were also made after our capital campaign resulting in dollars for enhancing the sanctuary and other areas of the church.





## Who We are Today

Grace and Holy Spirit is In the middle of the city of Cortland and is the heart and soul of the city, following Jesus and serving his people. We continue to operate as a blended Episcopal and ELCA Lutheran Christian faith community that extends an open invitation to other unaligned Christians who want to worship with us. In June 2014, Pentecost Sunday, the congregation unanimously voted to merge under the New York State law as a Religious Association, with the name Grace and Holy Spirit Church. We are led by a shared board, the Mission Leadership Board, composed of both Episcopal and Lutheran congregants and we celebrate both Episcopal and ELCA Lutheran traditions. We are a small but vital heartbeat of downtown Cortland with a long history of serving the hungry, the poor, the broken and those with disabilities. We continue to see our future as bright and making a difference within the Cortland community.



## Services

- In-Person, Sunday 9:30am and on Zoom
- Cafe Church, Saturday 5pm, an informal service
- Compline, Thursday evening, online via zoom





## Community Partnerships and Parish Outreach

Grace and Holy Spirit has several community hosted and church sponsored programs to enhance our outreach to the community in accordance with our mission.



### Hosted

- 12-Step Programs
- Scouts
- Loaves and Fishes (feeding the hungry)
- Parish hall meals six days per week
- Hygiene cart for our guests' needs
- School backpack program
- Clothing give-away in cooperation with parish
- Food Sense: coordinate Food Bank of Central New York program to be available at our church
- Warming Center
- Red Cross Office
- Offender Community Integration Services
- Fire Department Auxiliary
- Family Health Network mobile medical van site
- Cortland Farmers Market site
- *Preparing an Evacuation center, coming soon!*



### Sponsored

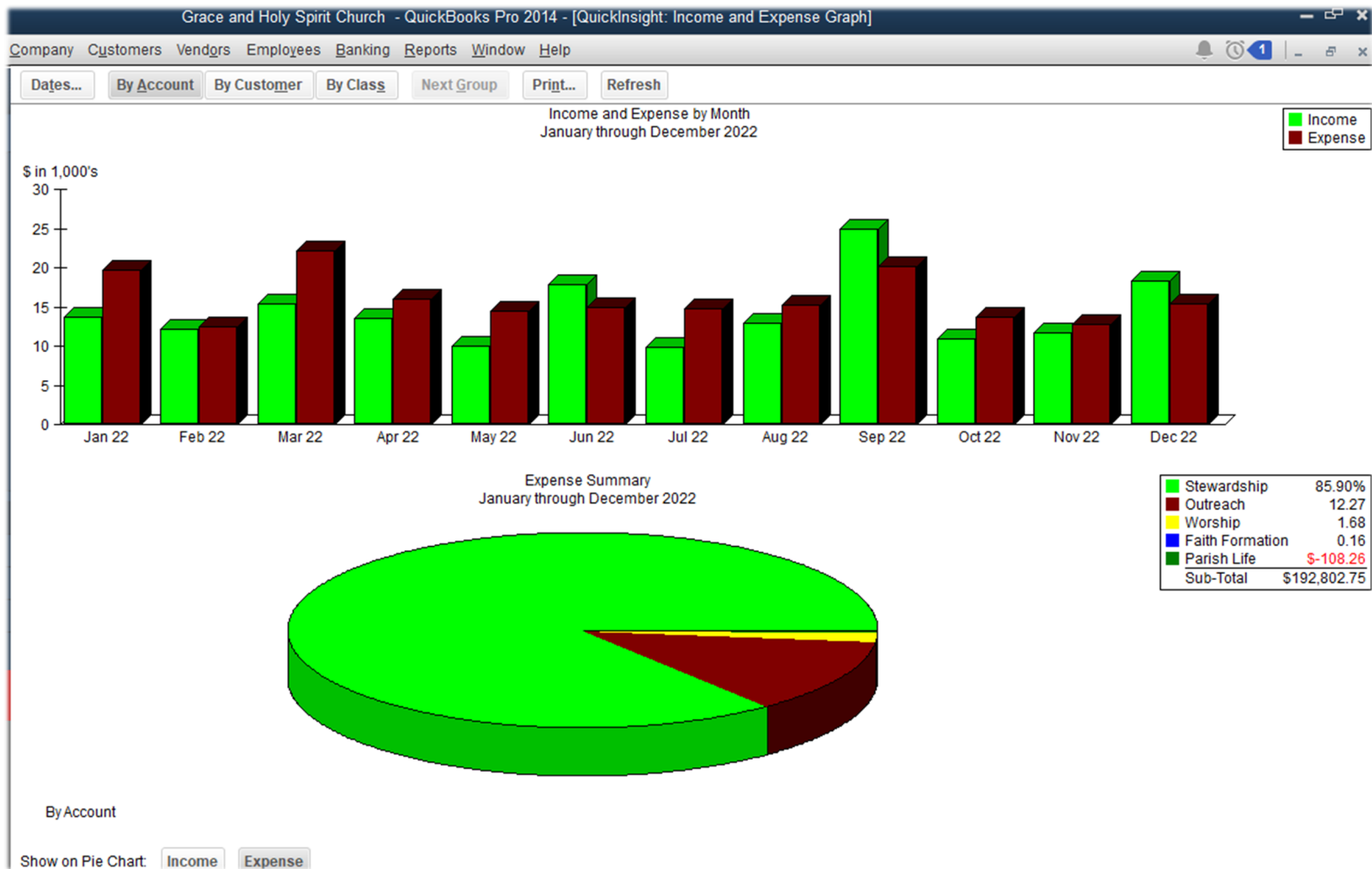
- Relay for Life (fundraising for breast cancer)
- Christmas elves
- Pastoral care
- Feed our Neighbors: supports meals for the community during Loave and Fishes closed period
- Diversity Programming: education to enhance our knowledge of important diverse faith leaders in our history.
- Education for ministry
- Many outreach programs are funded by our efforts at fundraising and donations for causes that are deemed relevant and important to our community.





## Finances and Stewardship

Grace and Holy Spirit has an operating budget of approximately \$195,000.00. The building upkeep and expenses are non-negotiable and take up the bulk of the expenses not including salaries. Many of our outreach programs are funded by our efforts at fundraising and donations for causes that are important to the church community. We also have an endowment worth over a million dollars, which supplements our operating budget using interest only on a monthly basis.



## Finances and Stewardship continued

In 2016 the church experienced a fire which damaged much of the main floor, as well as smoke damage throughout the entire building. With the insurance reimbursement, the building was cleaned, the office area was moved to the first floor along with the rector's office and the upstairs was renovated as a meeting area and quiet room. The sanctuary was reconfigured to enable more flexibility within the space. In 2018, the church embarked on a successful Capital Campaign which enabled us to modernize the church. A handicap lift was installed and the entire basement was modernized and redone.

In early 2022, we applied for and received an American Rescue Plan grant to purchase a generator for our building. This allowed us to pursue an evacuation center designation through the American Red Cross. This project is a work in progress.

Lastly, our Stewardship Committee, operates from the perspective of gratitude and aims to share all of our gifts with the church and community, as well as, offers strategies for enhancing our income and meeting the needs of our community. We have lost several significant donors due to life changes and deaths. We are prayerfully addressing this significant hit to our income. Conversations about how to utilize our Episcopal Endowment are ongoing with a healthy debate on strategic planning.





## Our Goals for the Future

The congregation post pandemic is searching to fully expand and integrate our services, parish life, and community outreach with the following aims:

- Call for a Priest or Pastor in-Charge
- Grow the congregation and share our faith
- Be open and welcoming to younger parishioners and their children
- Assess the worship needs of the congregation
- Secure consistent leadership to develop our music ministry
- Provide ministry and outreach to our downtown, inner-city community.
- Be welcoming for **ALL** *within the church and our community. We strongly believe that the Church is not just a building, but a church body reaching out to meet people where they are.*
- Find new ways to connect with college students and young adults with our faith community and mission
- Grow our financial resources and create ways to increase stewardship and maximize use of facilities to maintain our ability to do great things with limited resources.



## **We Expect our Rector to:**

- Be fully open and welcoming to ALL with an emphasis on younger parishioners and their children
- Design worship services in collaboration with lay leadership for the needs of the parish which may include a Saturday service and/or more than one Sunday service.
- Get to know the people and discern their gifts and cultivate their skill
- Nurture the congregants' spiritual growth.
- Model spiritual health through spiritual disciplines of bible study and/or meditation.
- Conduct home and hospital visits to congregants, including our Sunday zoomers, to receive communion in their home if they are unable to come to church.
- Understand both ELCA and Episcopal traditions
- Be the leadership presence to the congregation while maintaining personal health through appropriate self care
- Accommodate the spiritual needs of the community, e.g. baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.
- Assist in securing consistent leadership for service music
- Supervise church personnel
- Exercise appropriate administrative skills and the ability to delegate
- Conduct ecumenical outreach to other churches and organizations in Cortland
- Deliver biblically based sermons that are relatable and connected to world events and personal stories.



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